



**U.S. House Committee on Ways & Means Hearing:  
“In Their Own Words: Paid Leave, Child Care, and an Economy that Failed Women”  
April 21, 2021**

**Written testimony submitted for the record  
Lanette Dumas, Executive Director, National Association for Family Child Care**

Chairman Neal, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee, thank you for holding a hearing on child care and paid leave that made space for women to share their real experiences in their own words.

My name is Lanette Dumas, and I am the Executive Director of the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). NAFCC is the leading national nonprofit organization dedicated to the business and practice of high-quality family child care. We are home to the only national accreditation system for family child care programs, providing training, recognition, and support to family child care educators. For nearly 40 years, NAFCC has shaped the future of early care and education through leadership, professional development, policy, and advocacy.

Family child care is the business of child care and the practice of early care and education in the program provider’s home. Family child care educators are creating crucial early learning opportunities right in our own neighborhoods. The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) identified one million paid providers caring for children in a home, caring for three million children from birth to age five in these settings. Professional family child care is just one part of the much larger community of home-based child care arrangements that families count on. NSECE identified about 118,000 listed, paid providers caring for over 750,000 children ages birth through age five.

The number of licensed family child care homes has been rapidly decreasing, however. The 2017 Child Care Licensing Study revealed that the number of licensed family child care homes dropped by 22 percent since 2014<sup>1</sup>. Family child care educators share that it is the economics, aging/retirement, and a challenging job overall without sufficient dollars/resources dedicated to family child care. This was *before* the extraordinary risks and pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis we experienced in the last year.

Family child care is the preferred arrangement of many families, and a necessity across the country. Family child care is uniquely well-positioned to meet the needs of families often challenged to identify reliable child care options, as well. This includes families with infants and toddlers, families needing care during nontraditional hours, military families, communities of color and immigrant families, families of children with special needs, and families in rural communities.

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<sup>1</sup> National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (2020) *Trends in Family Child Care Home Licensing Requirements and Policies for 2017* retrieved from [https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/2003\\_fcch\\_licensing\\_trends\\_brief\\_2017\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/2003_fcch_licensing_trends_brief_2017_final_0.pdf)

Over ninety percent (94.2%) of listed, home-based providers were caring for at least one child under three years of age, while 85.5% were caring for at least one preschooler (ages 3 through 5 years).<sup>2</sup> Almost two-thirds (63.2%) reported serving at least one school-age child.<sup>3</sup> Nationally, one in five children (20 percent) receiving child care funded by the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program are cared for in family child care.<sup>4</sup> Family child care providers care for 23 percent of infants younger than age 1, and 21 percent of toddlers ages 1–3, in CCDF-supported child care.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-four percent of listed, paid home-based providers report offering some care during non-standard hours.<sup>6</sup>

Positive experiences, interactions, and opportunities in a child’s time in child care – regardless of the type of child care arrangement – are essential for healthy child development and essential for working families to be reliable employees. Families are counting on child care, and that requires the work of adults who are healthy, well and compensated. We can do more to ensure the children in family child care are ready for school and ready for life, and we can do more to support a diverse, respected, compensated, professional early childhood workforce. Let’s work together to recognize the role of family child care for families, in the early childhood field, and in policy decisions.

**Thank you for the opportunity to share what they are saying, in their own words. Thank you for considering each of their experiences on the following pages.**

To connect with a family child care provider or association in your state or to discuss these critical issues further, please contact me at [ldumas@nafcc.org](mailto:ldumas@nafcc.org).

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<sup>2</sup> National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2016). Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education. OPRE Report #2016-13, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>3</sup> National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2016). Characteristics of Home-based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education. OPRE Report #2016-13, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. (2019). *FY 2018 Preliminary Data Table 3 - Average Monthly Percentages of Children Served by Types of Care*. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2018-preliminary-data-table-3-average-monthly-percentages-children-served-types-care>

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. (2019). *FY 2018 Preliminary Data Table 13 - Average Monthly Percentages of Children in Child Care by Age Category and Care Type*. Retrieved from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/data/fy-2018-final-data-table-13-average-monthly-percentages-children-child-care-age-category>

<sup>6</sup> National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2015). Fact Sheet: Provision of Early Care and Education during Non-Standard Hours. (OPRE Report No. 2015-44). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-early-care-and-education-nsece-2010-2014>

**The National Association for Family Child Care turned to the field and asked, “What do you want Members of Congress to know right now about the work of child care, the families counting on you - and your own family counting on you?”**

We received hundreds of replies from family child care educators. Thank you for considering this selection of stories about their experiences.

“I want them to know that we are taking a risk every day we keep kids. We are underpaid, overlooked. They put us in a different category than school staff. We do the same thing they do, teaching kids.” – Alabama

“Being a home daycare provider, I think we are not taken seriously enough. When all schools, day care centers, Head Start, preK programs were all closed due to COVID, we were asked to stay open so health care workers will have some place to leave their children. Our family got hit by COVID because we are being open. We as professional caregivers work very hard. We are professionals, education not babysitting.” – Alabama

“In these days of uncertainty, it is more important than ever to offer high quality loving care to children and support to families. They need the support and education I offer along with care for their children. My own teens need the assurance that I will be able to maintain my business and give them the security they need. Our community does not have enough child care. Congresspeople, we need you to realize how crucial it is to support us which supports working families and thus supports our economy. Many programs in our state have closed or are teetering in the edge of closing. You can make a difference in the lives of thousands of families and children including my own.” – Arkansas

“I love what I am doing. I have taken over 60 college unit and many hours of training so I can better understand and teach my children. I give them the love of learning. They know that I am never too busy to help them or just listen to them. Young children this age are just developing their gross and fine motor skills. We know how to help them develop social skills as well as academic skills. They need to develop social skills such as sharing, respecting other children and the many other things to be a good citizen as well as a good student. In a small setting I can move onto another activity when they are getting bored. I have had many parents come back to tell me how well their children are doing in school because of me.” – California

“I have spent thousands of dollars on turning my classroom to be outdoors so I can keep my children safe. I spend my evenings doing lesson plans, getting supplies ready for the next day, planning meals and now cleaning and sanitizing everything. I spend my weekends buying food, buying supplies, trying to find the sanitation supplies, and deep cleaning everything so it will be safe for my children.” – California

“We need the three- and four-year-old and they need us. I need their big smile when they accomplish something new, and they need the love that a family daycare provider can give them.” – California

“A safe environment inside my home for all attendees and my own family. Healthy safe space for all children to eat, work and play. I would like to receive sick pay, vacation pay, medical leave of absence pay. I am opened year-round for all these families without any special benefits. Many parents count on my care for their families as I depend on their services as my financial funds in life.” – California

“Quality Family Child care provides a unique and vital option for parents who need childcare. Small group care provides higher quality interactions and less stress for children; children who have one caregiver consistently throughout their childhood develop higher levels of resiliency and trust; family childcare providers build strong and supportive family relationships. Please support Family Childcare -- we are CRUCIAL for the peace of mind for working parents, and for the human development of the children!” – Florida

“Child care providers have their hands full taking care of children 12 hours a day. It is exhausting.” – Florida

“I am still struggling with low enrollment due to the Pandemic and as a single black mother of a first-year college student; I have been maintaining my livelihood with the support of the stimulus checks and grants from various agencies. Without these supports, I would have been forced to close my small business. I want the Members of Congress to know how important it is for some providers still struggling to continue to receive the financial support from the Government until families are able to start working again and enrolling their children back into childcare.” – Florida

“Some think that home child cares are baby sitters. If you come to my home, you will see that I have a school where I teach the little ones in play and fun. My families depend on me. My own family counts on me to have a sound mind and happy at what I do.” – Florida

“I want Members of Congress to understand that what we do is powerful and needed. We are the light that lights a child imagination and determination!” – Florida

“Our job as a child care provider is very hard and it requires a lot of responsibility. However, the payment is low considering that with this same money we must support our families and at the same time invest in our business. Also, we do not have paid vacations or sick days which would be a great benefit. I love my work, but I would like to be considered. Thank you.” – Florida

“Congress must understand how important family child care providers are to the growth of our economy. We need to be valued as educators and not babysitters. We must be valued and paid as a much-needed asset of the work force. We put in very long hours daily and don't make minimum wage.” – Georgia

“I was a Family Child Care Provider because I cared. I cared about children, their families, and my community. I cared about making a positive difference in all of them, for this day and for their future. I cared if the children were learning while they were playing, laughing, singing, reading, and discovering the beautiful wonders in the world all around them. I cared if their parents had any questions or problems that needed answers. I cared about other providers caring for other children. I cared about my children and my family too. I care about making a better world for all of us, any way I can. I still care about that now and I hope you care about that too. Thank you.” – Georgia

“I would like to share that Family Child Care Providers have to meet the same requirements of childcare centers and should get the same considerations for financial stability and health benefits. Many of us stayed opened during the early months of the pandemic with very little trusted information and some to the detriment of their personal families. We are professionals in the ECE industry and are vital to a strong community and healthy, recovering economy. The early years of a child's life are crucial to brain

development, social/emotional development, and guarding against trauma, as well as school readiness. Let's make a positive difference now. Thank you for your time!" – Georgia

"Family childcare is the foundation of many resources for families. We offer quality childcare, reliable, dependable service, support for mothers who are unable to be present with their child on a daily basis. We care for the WHOLE child, that includes social and emotional care at every milestone the child moves through. We offer an extension of the child's parent or grandparent. Often, many years after the care of a child, the parent or child will come back to me to let me know how much I made a difference in their lives. My steadfast care/service ensured they always had a helping hand." – Georgia

"I have owned and managed my early childcare learning home for over 20 years. I provide quality child care to children ages six weeks through twelve years. My goal is to continue to provide service to families for another 10 years. I am hoping Congress continues to support us. As an Early Childcare Educator, I get limited time off, limited vacations, and minimal raises. I love what I do but need to continue to see support from Congress to maintain my business. I have struggled through this pandemic, but my heart and head remain focused on caring for our children. Continue to support us so we can support our families." – Georgia

"I want Congress to know that it has been a blessing serving babies and children throughout my years, I am now 57 years old, but my biggest struggle starting up in college and dropping out because it was difficult to be in college and run my family daycare business at the same time with not enough resources for college. I think that there should be more resources for childcare providers to go to college for their degree. I also think there should be more grants available for our family daycare homes to accommodate the children that we serve. I am struggling with home improvements and children learning tools and equipment as we speak as well as spaces to fill where I do not have any children at the time because of COVID-19." – Georgia

"We need affordable healthcare for self-employed people, and funding to support child care providers with paid vacation time." – Georgia

"We are open and work tirelessly to provide care for our families and we are underpaid we don't take vacation because we don't get vacation pay. We wear many hats we are the children's teachers, providers, cooks, book keeper just to name a few things on our list. We love what we do and love our children and families we would like to be greatly appreciate in what we do." – Georgia

"Childcare is a 100%-time demanding industry. We commend the help that the state, local and federal government render to us periodically but there are more to our needs as Family Child Care Home Providers. The children that we care for, their families, the community around us and at large have high expectations of outcome from us. We do our best possible every hour and every day, but we still need the assistance of Congress to pass a bill that will provide payroll for our helpers as well as vacation package for us. We rarely and barely take time off because of our commitment and passion to effectively serve children and their families with Quality Care and attention." – Georgia

"We need a society that looks at our profession as educators and not babysitters. We hold our standards to the highest esteem and need society to do the same. It's sad 2020 had to show the WORLD how vital family childcare providers actually are. We need help to build our business back up to our maximum limit and acknowledge us as professionals." – Georgia

“Family child care due to the relationship with the parents were able to remain open during the Covid-19 era. Family child care builds upon the family relationship. Not only is family child care a business, but it is also the glue that helps children and families learn and work. Family child care non-traditional hours help families continue to be employed due to our flexibility in available child care hours. Family child care makes a difference.” – Georgia

“I am licensed through the city of Boise; my enrollment is 6 children. I opened my program in Nov 2019, had full enrollment by December 15, 2019, with a waitlist (this shows how badly childcare is needed in our area). When the closures hit, I lost my waitlist and 3 families. This was half my income. Because of covid, I wasn't willing to bring in new families and honestly families weren't looking for care. I don't know if I would have been able to stay open or continued providing childcare to my families if it wasn't for the grants provided to childcares. It honestly is what kept me going. The additional grant funds continue to help supply us with personal protection, extra grocery costs, missed wages when families can't pay due to covid quarantine. The federal COVID-19 child care relief has helped in so many ways, I would be lost without it. Our communities cannot function without childcare Providers, childcare Providers can't survive without help. Our families are financially struggling every day, providers can't raise rates without taking away from our families. By childcare providers business's getting help, we then help your community and families. If childcare programs closed, parents would have nowhere for their children to go. Someone said to me, ‘If you think that roads, bridges, power, water, and internet are vital to the infrastructure of our cities and state, why do you not believe that childcare is just as vital?’ I can say even as a childcare provider, I had never thought of the importance of childcare like this. It really hit home and made realize we are important. Thanks for helping us show we are important.” – Idaho

“What I would like to see is a response to the overwhelming situation we as childcare provider are continuously having to cope with financially and emotionally due to the COVID -19 pandemic. That has placed us and a horrible financial situation, we all need support during this time in order to maintain and continue providing quality services for our childcare and families. We are asking or government to consider Compensating our monthly Financial losses due to low enrollment during this pandemic.” – Illinois

“Members of Congress need to know that staff in childcare facilities outside of public schools are with the children in their first years of life. We need to be acknowledged just like the Public Schools. We are overlooked, underpaid. Show us someone cares.” – Illinois

“work 6 A.M.-7 P.M., 5 days a week taking of children. The parents heavily rely on me. I would like paid vacation time off.” – Indiana

“I would like for Congress to know that I built my business based on love and concern for our children, community and to make an impact on the world one child at a time. The salaries that we make and income we have to juggle is beyond stressful. Increase in income and demand of more services are seriously needed.” – Indiana

“We are barely hanging on. Everything we need has gone up in price, we are losing families due to loss of job or fear of the virus, we are working harder and longer to keep our classroom clean and our children safe. We need help before we completely close our doors. What I feel childcare providers have got was a door slamming us in the face.” – Indiana

"I want Members of Congress to know that I'm a single mother of 4, doing all of this on my own, keeping my family safe and providing the best care for the children. I'm open and working hours to provide care for our families and are under paid. I love what I do and love my children and families I would like to be greatly appreciate in what we do." -Iowa

"I started my in-home child care after being in a job for 10 years and quickly realizing that being a mother was viewed as a burden to my employers. So, for the past 5 years I have been doing my best to keep mental health professionals, elevator mechanics, cosmetic sales women, delivery truck drivers, community gardeners, army reserve soldiers, artists, landscapers, architects, at work, where women belong. This past year I did my part to keep our kids in the classroom virtually. I myself am closing this fall and do so with a heavy heart knowing there is a shortage of childcare providers in my state and 2 of my clients are giving birth in the next 30-60 days and still don't have childcare for their babies lined up yet. I hear the horror stories of waiting lists for baby care, paying to keep a spot held for hundreds of dollars a month for multiple months to guarantee a spot for baby. Quality, affordable, childcare is vital to give women a fighting chance in the working world. It is vital to enriching the building blocks of our nation, the family unit. We women have so much to offer our country, our communities, our families. We NEED the structure in place to be successful and the bones of that is the childcare provider. Fight for us as we fight daily to raise up the next generation of Americans." – Iowa

"I am struggling to have a high enough enrollment to remain solvent. Grants, EIDL round one and PPP round one has helped immensely along with mobile food distribution, mortgage help and stimulus." – Kansas

"When the schools closed, we were available. We didn't get any credit. We were available for the doctors, nurses, grocery store workers, police officers, and many more who had to work. The schools were not open, and some parents still had to work. We are valuable to the community. Just ask the Parents who use our services." – Maryland

"So many of us are terrified right now that our small family care settings are going to be closed in favor of childcare being offered at larger institutions. Please work with small providers as well as large ones to figure out how this can work for everyone." – Michigan

"I have been a daycare provider for 33 years and although I have a good reputation for what I do I still am often considered a "babysitter". Being a daycare provider is a high stress job and isn't for everyone. There are no benefits, you often work 12 hours a day, no breaks, provide 3 meals a day, activities that meet academic needs as well as cognitive, social emotional, and physical needs, no vacation pay, unpaid days off, no insurance, keeping up on training that is paid out of pocket on our own time, no 401K, all for \$2.50 an hour! And yet we consistently hear "the high cost of child care". Childcare is often set by average wages in the area. Low-income areas have lower prices than areas of higher wages. Society needs to look at our profession as educators and not babysitters. The year 2020 showed the nation how extremely important family child care providers actually are." – Michigan

"The families who are enrolled in my program need care 5 days a week typically ranging from 9-10 hours a day. Parents should continue to have a choice in the type of programs their children can attend. Early childhood education may go by different names but whether it is a school-based preschool, center or home-based program all are providing early childhood education and should not be dismissed as not

doing so. Home based programs like mine should not be disregarded because they are not in a traditional school setting. Working with those who are currently in early childhood makes more sense than creating new programs.” – Michigan

“Out of my home I run a play-based preschool program for children 2-5. I have a bachelor’s degree in elementary education, 6 years’ experience teaching in lower elementary and a master’s degree in early childhood education. I chose to open a home daycare to provide my own children as well as others with an outstanding early childhood experience founded in developmentally appropriate practices and immersed in nature. I go above and beyond to provide the children in my program with a preschool experience that aims at developing the whole child. Supporting their social, emotional, and physical development through outdoor play and learning is the main focus of my program. As an educator having the options to be with my own children, earn an income and continue to provide children with an early childhood education is an amazing experience.” – Michigan

“I’ve been an in-home daycare for 32 years. I have a high school diploma but not a college degree, and my daycare families are fine with that. They want a provider they can trust who will love, nurture, and teach their child in a fun, clean and safe environment.” – Michigan

“Parents count on me for not only basic skills but also social skills and the amount of time I am open to accommodate their work schedules. My family counts on me not only for the income but also for my flexibility with my children.” – Michigan

“I have provided care to children from all ages, we need to be seen as professional, we are qualified care takers, we teach the children the essential before they go onto kindergarten. I’m a professional of 24 years, I have many children through the year come back and say thank you for the great care you gave me, so I could achieve becoming a sports broadcaster, a nurse and even trade school. We need our plumber and our carpenter. Thanks for letting me share and god bless.” – Michigan

“The vast majority of Childcare providers work hard every single day to prepare children with the skills that they will need to succeed in school and in life for the brief time that we have them in care programs.” - Michigan

“I have been in the childcare field for 34 years. 23 of those years have been running a small home childcare. I have an associate degree in Early Childhood Education and continue to take classes to stay up to date on the latest studies or areas of concern in the childcare field. The children who come to me stay with me usually 4-5 years. Young children need continuation of care from one or two caregivers that form a strong bond. Family childcare is very important to our children's health and education.” – Michigan

“I have been a daycare provider 23 years and I enjoy watching my daycare children grow. I enjoy watching children laugh, play, learn words and taking first steps. All my daycare children and I been together since March 2020 and have not have a problem with Covid. No one been sick. I have worked hard to keep by children and family safe by cleaning extra and washing everything more. It has cost me a lot of extra money and time. Thanks for listening to me.” – Michigan



“As an educator of young children from my home, I am shocked to hear that many don’t believe I am providing an education to these children. I have a BS in Early Childhood Education and am less than a year away from obtaining my MA in Early Childhood, I also am Infant Mental Health Certified. Children need structure and know what is coming next for them, as well as who their primary caregiver is. I offer both of those things in a small setting that is like a second home to them. These kids and their parents become a part of my family while they are in care.” – Michigan

“I am a licensed Family Child Care in Michigan. I have been in business for 20 years. In that time, I have had the privilege of helping raise hundreds of children. I have loved them, cuddled them, guided them, and taught them. I am not just a Day Care you can drop your kid off for the day. I am a Professional providing a much-needed service. I prepare children to be a success in school. They learn how to be friends, a student, a strong individual confident in themselves, and how to take guidance from a teacher.” – Michigan

“Many of us Family Child Care programs work hard to be considered High Quality. I have my Child Development Associates, Early Childhood college classes, and put in extra training hours every year. I pride myself on staying current on Early Childhood practices. For my own family, my Child Care is our main form of income. I am a Woman owned business and proud of it. I love being a Preschool teacher and Child Care Provider and I am darn good at it. I am the person parents can come to for advice and questions on their child's development. The one they will listen to when a child is behind and needs help. We work together. We work to make sure their child is socially, emotionally, developmentally, and physically exactly where they need to be. If there is an issue, we work together to get them help.” – Michigan

“Please make sure you word any new or existing bills/legislation to include those who are family child care. It is very specific when we are left out. I am asking Congress to think of the children, their families, and my business. We all are working together to make our lives a success. Help us. Give us more subsidies or grants to help offset the cost to parents. Give us providers free access to college classes. Help us. Thank you for your time and consideration.” Michigan

“It is a tough profession at times. But we do it because we love children. Most of us DO NOT charge enough for what we have to do each day. I have not raised my rates in 4 years. I do not charge over time or a late fee. I’m very concerned for my parents and children or any family if their daycare shuts down. We are losing more and more great daycare providers because right now either they can’t get dependable assistance or can’t find one at all. That is my issue. I am licensed as group daycare which I can have up to 12 children with an assistant. I have been running as a family daycare that has 6. So, in the end I am not making my full potential in income. I also wanted to let you know that we have to do anywhere from 10-20 hours of continuous education each year. CPR every other year. Different classes mandated by our state every year. A huge amount of paperwork. And on top of all that keep our homes clean during the pandemic. We work hard every day for our money.” - Michigan

“I'm facing a huge turn over this summer (due to 1 family being relocated & a couple kids start kindergarten) and am having a hard time finding eligible children to fill those spots. People just are not moving children over 2 years old, and we can only have 3 under two. This leaves me with 2 empty spots until I can grow those littles. This loss of income puts my family in financial risk.” – Minnesota

"Being a family childcare provider has allowed me provide for my family while also giving me the opportunity to pursue my passion of early childhood education. During the pandemic, I have provided a safe, reliable environment for my clients offering stability in an uncertain time. I've also been able to assist my own children with distance learning. At the heart of family childcare is the relationships we form - that is irreplaceable. Please keep family childcare as an option for families." – Minnesota

"I love my family childcare I know the families in my care love me I nurture and teach and prepare my childcare for life experience I believe all of my childcare kids go out prepared and confident when they outgrow my program." – Minnesota

"We are educators, we are teachers! We are professionals. We are a woman dominated profession, yet we are not taken seriously. We've all been told it is women's work to take care of the children. We excel in it, but we are still a profession. I opened my family child care business because I could not afford the tuition at the early childhood education school I worked at. I have a high-quality program in Michigan, and I worked hard to establish my business. I have a waiting list of families that can't wait to get into my program. I want to keep it developmentally appropriate." – Minnesota

"I want the people not in our profession to understand that early childhood is not daycare it's not preschool it's not child care it's early childhood education. I would love to get rid of the different terms used to describe early childhood education. When you use words like daycare, child care, and preschool it confuses everybody, and people don't understand that it's all early childhood education. No matter the setting you work in, whether it's your home, a center, a church or a public school we are all Early Childhood Educators doing our best to get children ready for the rest of their lives. Our programs deserve the recognition that all other Early childhood programs get." – Minnesota

"I stayed home with my children; I have a degree in early childhood. But if were to work my paycheck would be gone to just pay tuition for childcare. Staying home and doing what I like, also to be business women is a dream come true by opening my own in-home day care. I have been a licensed family child care provider since December of 1986. I have cared for hundreds of children throughout the years. So many are successful individuals. They are doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, attorneys, moms and dads, social workers, IT professionals, just to name a few. I strongly feel children need to be allowed to play to learn and truly benefit from the small group setting of family child care. Children surrounded by other children of multiple ages can learn together, grow together and then lead others. I am proud of my own children and all the others that have walked through my door. As a family child care provider, I know I am offering what is best for children to help them prepare for life in today's society. Thank you." - Minnesota

"I have been a Family Daycare provider for more than 4 years now licensed and almost 5 years since the year before I was unlicensed while getting things ready for daycare. For the last 2 years I have not made money going by my taxes I have lost over \$3000 each year. I truly don't see me doing daycare much longer unless things change a lot. My daycare is open from 6 am to 5 pm, 4 days a week. Normally I have kids from 7 am to 5 pm. 40 hours a week with kids. Plus, the hours I spend not with kids is around 3 hours to 4 hours a day cleaning those 4 days. That is 57 hours a week. This is also not counting all the paperwork, training, getting things line up for preschool curriculum, grocery shopping for daycare, meal preps, extra deep cleaning every week, rearranging the daycare so kids don't get board on average that is another 12 hours at least a week. I thought going into daycare that if I had 10 kids, I would be able to make my wage when I was working at the job before. I never realized how much work a daycare provider has to do. I feel like the little guy is getting pushed out again. Daycare providers need to make

more money to be able to better provide for our family and our daycare kids. In short thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Please think about the little guys that is also taking care of these wonderful humans.” - Minnesota

“For almost 30 years my livelihood has been an early childhood educator at my home being a licensed family childcare provider. As a family childcare provider, I provide a loving, nurturing, safe home away from home when parents are away at work. Deep bonds are formed and turn over with staff is nonexistent, something that is extremely important to the psychological health of the young child. I provide healthy foods, safe quiet rest spaces, room for gross motor skills to be developed. Throughout the day I provide many opportunities for learning to occur naturally. There are many materials available for the children to explore, reading, science, math, music, art. We incorporate all of these daily, but in hands on, child led, developmentally appropriate ways. The parents of the young children I care for see me as an extension of their family, but also as an educator. Over the years I have prepared dozens of children for kindergarten, and they have all done exceptionally well. Family childcare providers go above and beyond to ensure the children in their care are given opportunities for learning to occur. The most important thing we provide is a nurturing environment filled with hugs and affection and a deep loving bond that lasts for years. Family childcare providers work so hard to keep up with all the changing requirements by licensing, keeping our houses clean and sanitized, doing hours of book keeping, shopping, exploring the internet for ideas and yes, always looking for items to buy or classes to take that will ensure that our little clients are always given the best opportunities to learn. We especially have been amazing and very needed during this pandemic. We have kept our doors open and have risked our safety and lives to ensure that parents have a safe, loving place to send their children. We were always essential workers, now especially and we will continue to be. Please do not forget about us!” – Minnesota

“I would just like to say that as a provider, I do my best to make sure that all the children that I have cared for through the years have had a safe place to grow and learn and thrive. I have taught them basics before they go to school. But also, have let them play and be kids. They are only little for such a very short time. All of the providers work hard to make sure we get the children ready for school. We stayed open through the pandemic. We make sure we are open and accommodate the parents and the children. I love my job. Thank you for listening.” – Minnesota

“I provide love, care, nurturing environment. Also provide learning for kindergarten readiness. Funding should be offered to parents to all possibilities to fit their family’s needs. My family has counted on my income all these years so I could stay home and raise my children along with almost 60 kids that have been in my care over the years.” – Minnesota

“I have been taking care of young people for over 38 years, through these I have been educating myself because it is important, I care for each child to have a good start for kindergarten. I just finished my 3 Star rating, after that I’m going to start educating myself further in regard of being a 4 Star rated provider. I put in 13 hours a day, I work with multiple age groups, infant to 11 years old! My work is the most important thing. I’m not only loving to be around children, but I take every opportunity to help each child individually in regards of their needs, I work daily to teach children everything, so they have a great start as they enter their next step – kindergarten. So please understand I don’t just watch children, but I support them in every way I possibly can. I don’t see myself as just a provider, but I am a professional in every age group. I support every child which enters my home, no matter what age. I will be there for them. I keep a constant routine and rules. I support each child with support of their home life, things that go on in their mind or in their home life. I challenge myself to find a way to help each one of these special young Kiddos. Without them my life wouldn’t have the meaning it has, not only be

a provider, but also as an educator! I remember back when I was a child and how confusing life was at the time, it falls easy to me to understand and put myself into their shoes. Every child deserves a head start to life, a child in my care would not feel left behind, the children in my care know how much I care and love them” - Minnesota

“I am writing to you while I have a small bit of downtime. That is pretty rare during the day while caring for my mixed age group of 11 children. The ages range from one years old to nine years old.

I am an educator. I have a degree in elementary education with an emphasis in early childhood education. At the start of my career, I was in multiple classrooms and taught multiple grade levels. I enjoyed teaching the students and collaborating with other teachers. Then I was drawn to stay home with my own children while they were young. That is when I started my home daycare.

My program has shifted and grown throughout the last eight years. I am improving daily as I grow my program into what I’ve been dreaming of creating. A few goals that I have set for my own business are:

To prepare children for kindergarten

To build a firm foundation that allows kids to explore and engage in their surroundings

To grow their knowledge and confidence

To learn to love the natural world that God created

These are just a few of the main goals that I strive to achieve every day.

I can attest to the learning the children in my care receive. I am growing life-long learners that have more worth and knowledge beyond benchmarks and report cards. I don’t just “care for children” I also work with families to help raise them. The parents trust me, they rely on me, and they know I am highly qualified to care for their children.” – Minnesota

“Provide funding for better childcare or quality care. Many of us have taken steps to be better educated and teach preschool right out of our homes. Being home with my boys has allowed me to better bond with them. But I still need the income as in America wives can’t just stay home anymore. Now I am bonding with other children and their families. I am relied on to provide good care so parents can work.” – Minnesota

“Family childcare excels in relationship-based care and provides consistent small group settings at an affordable price. Quality early childhood education happens in many settings. Family childcare is ESSENTIAL to the future of our country.” – Minnesota

“I had to be other people’s counselor before taking care of my fears. Main issues are how to pay higher taxes and other items when we are still trying to get going again? I struggled February, and March the most this year. I had to pay in taxes, I had property taxes to pay (next year will be doubled). Prices are going up on things we need for childcare. Food that meets the food program for childcare. Cleaning supplies are finally becoming more accessible, at one time I was sending my husband and children to drive an hour to check stores to get the supplies I needed for childcare. The supplies were limited many times and out other times. Thankfully, it was not like that after Christmas. Funding childcare helps families have quality childcare during a crisis that they can still attend. I could have closed my doors many times to switch to another line of work, however I have put years of work into my business, and I don’t want to go down that easily. The funds that the state of Minnesota has given to childcare has helped in many ways; projects to provide better childcare, cost of property, sanitizing, more time to be educated and prepared for childcare. Funding helps with stress too. I was sad to see less funds are given this month to childcare; however, it still is appreciated. Thank you for supporting childcare and I hope more help can be given in the future.” - Minnesota

“As a family child care provider, I have put my heart and soul into my business. I have chosen the Parent Aware rating, earning the highest 4-star rating (1st in my area). I provide the children in my care with a quality beginning in life and education. My family child care allows the children in my care and in my own family to grow. I love family child care in the essence that the littlest ones learn by imitating the bigger/older children. They want to do what the 5-year-olds are doing whether it is zipping their own jackets, climbing the ladder to the slide, turning pages, and making up stories in the books. Family child care is a blessing in providing a family style learning approach instead of a systematic methodology. Please continue to work with and support our licensed Family Child Care providers.” – Minnesota

“I’ve been in childcare 33 years. I started my business initially because it gave me a means to stay home with my own children while still bringing in a little income. When I started, childcare was a less than an appealing career. I made \$.75 per hour per child. I worked 24 hours a day, five days a week. It was TOUGH. But I also wanted to be home with my children, so the sacrifice was, in my eyes, worth it. 33 years later, I work 10 hours a day, M-F, my children are grown and married, and I have a scrapbook FULL of cards and letters from other families telling me what a difference I have made in their lives. I am still in communication with many of them. They are my “extended family”. They remind me daily why I do what I do. The road has not been easy, nor has it been lucrative. But I have built a business over the years that I can be proud of and families sign on years in advance. The honor to have families choose me to watch their little ones is an honor and privilege. I chose to continue childcare because I love what I do, and it’s rewarding to me. I have a few years left in me, but I write you because I really want home childcare to be here for my children’s children, and my grandchildren. I think we matter greatly to the families we care for.” – Minnesota

“All these years I have financed my business with my earnings, many times using a greater percent of those earnings to keep it running and families happy, than paying myself first. I will tell you that during Covid, things got pretty intense, and costs increased greatly. Hours were long because of extra cleaning and preparation, and the worry was great that families would leave. The grants and extra funding for childcare during this time was unbelievably helpful! It helped ease the burden during a very difficult time. But even in good times, that extra help means better equipment, more supplies and better learning....and sometimes a little extra to help with unpaid sick time or unpaid time off that you didn’t see coming, or sometimes it helps with income loss if you lose a family unexpectedly. It sure has lessened the stress for me financially. That’s a welcome relief after 33 years.” – Minnesota

“The child care business is tough. In order to find families to sign on you need to be in the right location, have the right hours of operation, the family interviewing must like you and your home and what you offer, and the daycare must have an opening for the age of their child, and availability for when they need childcare to start. Most times, all those factors don’t line up. The answer to helping the childcare shortage is better education, grants and funding continuing to help providers, and access to healthcare. On the family side of childcare: make childcare write offs worthwhile. Give families a bigger break on their taxes to make childcare more affordable. Home daycares offer families and “extended family” atmosphere and a “home feel”. Families prefer their kids to have the love and one on one home daycares can provide. We need to make sure that continues, for the future of America’s children....and because home daycares are making a difference in childcare, and we want to continue to make that difference for years to come.” – Minnesota

“I have been a licensed childcare provider for 28 years. I continue to adore my job but over the years I’ve had many ups and downs and worries about income. All it takes if for one family to leave the group and my income is drastically reduced and it can take months sometimes to recover a new family. That

means the worry is there all the time because I am a single parent and have been for years. Please continue to understand what we put into these children and how important we are. To see a lot of the kids I have had over the years go off to college and become these incredibly talented adults is awesome and if I've had a little part in all of that has true meaning! This has been the first year that my career has been noticed and the funding you have allowed us to have to provide clean, stable environment during COVID has been a true blessing and it has relived so much stress in such a stressful year. I adore my job, but I've had many years I just didn't know if I could afford to keep running my childcare. Please consider us when you're making your decisions!" – Minnesota

"This last year has been nothing short of exhausting, I've had 3 appliances break down 3 daycare kids in distance learning, 2 college students full time at home, plus my HS Senior in distance learning. I took in extra daycare kids to help families out working almost 12-hour days just with daycare kids in my home and then spending extra time cleaning and getting ready for the next days. All my daycare families are "essential workers" they haven't had any time off and even working goofy hours. Then a bonus for me: my septic tank can't take all this extra strain that it dealt with this last year so it's forcing me to hook-up to city sewer and water. My city already charged me \$45,000 for my "new" street and water sewer lines now they are charging me \$5,200 for a city permit plus I have to pay \$16,722 for the plumbing digging and cement work that needs to be done to bring all the plumbing into my home! I'm so over all this. All of us child care providers took on so much since day one of the pandemic I have not heard of any that have complained about not taking care of all our little people we have all gone above and beyond our calling making things "normal" for all our littles and our own kids dealing with so much in our lives!!! Can I go on? I could probably write a book!! Have a wonderful day." - Minnesota

"Family Child Care is high quality care and seen as the most culturally responsive settings. We are in the communities we serve. We are close to our families and can build a relationship to support them in deep ways. Because I am the teacher, I have direct contact with the parent and child and can daily interact in a positive relationship with the parents to support them and their children. We are the small setting which can give the individual child the attention that they need. Since we are multi age, we have the ability to have children grow by supporting each other. They need love, connection, continuity, and the ability to grow and learn as a complete person. Licensed family child care homes do that best!" – Minnesota

"Do not discount the quality of our profession. I serve on our local school board and early childhood advisory council have also taught American Red Cross classes to providers along with workshop related to childcare. We providers invest in our families and offer quality and personal relations that last for decades making a lifetime impact on each child. Thank you for caring and moving in a direction that helps our youngest learners. Together we are making a difference!!" - Minnesota

"I am the husband of a most excellent child care provider. We have provided childcare and preschool in our home for 17 years. I work 66-80 hours a week delivering mail for the Post Office. I also work to provide the best environment for childcare that I can. Maintaining the outdoor and indoor play areas, our home, our yard. Cleaning, dishes, cooking. My wife works 70+ hours a week sacrificing our home for children and families that are looking for a smaller, more personal setting in which to prepare their children for school. From infant through preschool, we prepare these wonderful kids, and they enter school fully prepared and most of the time, they're ahead of their peers. We just sacrificed everything during Covid19 to stay open and provide childcare though our income dropped by more than half. We were open as centers and school care closed. We should be recognized as a strong, self-sufficient, viable

option for childcare.” - Minnesota

“I have a BS with an emphasis in early childhood education. When I first opened my licensed daycare 13 years ago, I was drawn to stay home with my own children while they were young. My youngest is now in kindergarten and I see family-based child care as a career I would like to stay with. I can attest to the learning the children in my care receive. I am growing lifelong learners that have more worth and knowledge beyond benchmarks and report cards. I don’t just “care for children” I also work with families to help raise them. The parents trust me, they rely on me, and they know I am highly qualified to care for their children. I know many quality providers that love their job and take pride in how they run their own business. There are many families connected to each and every provider. We have a great responsibility to teach and care for these children.” -Minnesota

“I do not want to quit. I love my kiddos and am heartbroken if I can't care for them...I've devoted my life for them.” - Minnesota

“I live in a small town and I can’t raise my rates to cover trainings. I already work 12 hours a day, then there’s cleaning, laundry, shopping. I keep doing it because I don’t want to start over. But if I was younger, I wouldn’t start in childcare. I can’t go to appointments because the state has made it impossible to have a substitute with all the training they need. So, I have to lose a whole day or just not take care of my health. It used to be a benefit to do daycare, you could be home with your own kids and make extra money, but not anymore. The cost to feed kids is getting unbearable. It’s constantly costing more and more money. So, I guess in my words, pay us a salary and benefits that are fitting for the amount of work we have do” – Minnesota

“Working in my family child care business has been a very rewarding career and I've built strong bonds with all my families. They were extremely grateful when my four K-3rd graders were able to do distance learning here. I created separate learning areas and my full-time adult daughter spent the entire school day moving between the kids answering questions. I also can't stress enough how important it is for preschoolers to bond with one caregiver in a home environment and be allowed to grow and learn based on their own developmental progress.” – Minnesota

“What we do is very important. Without us people could not work. I have 3 teachers, 4 in the medical field, 1 in restaurants and 1 in manufacturing. If I quit because of COVID these people could not work. Daycare is very scarce in our town.” – Minnesota

“I want everyone to know that we family child providers are important to the economy. We have worked throughout the pandemic.” – Minnesota

“I have been in the childcare industry for over 20 years, 20 of which I have worked Licensed Family Childcare. Family Childcare providers are educators. During a child’s first few years of life, children’s brains are rapidly developing. Licensed family childcare providers play an essential role in preparing children for school. I live in a childcare desert, the families I have count on me daily. Some families I have had for 8 years. I treat every family as an individual and help mold my program to their needs; From opening extra early for military families whose mom is deployed and Dad needs to leave for work at 5:30 am, to a single mom whose husband is in jail and her children need extra love and reassurance. A deaf family who has special needs children I have learned and teach sign language and allow speech therapists to enter into my program to work with the child as well as work with him on my own. Licensed Family Childcare is a unique setting that provides the families and the provider to work together to teach the child and mold them to be ready for kindergarten when that time come. The state

of MN we need funding to go to licensed family childcare, we get the short end of the stick when it comes to funding. So please think about where the funds are going and who is best to educate our children for the future.” - Minnesota

“Why don't we get benefits at a cheaper rate? Health, dental, life! A retirement fund. Why are we not offered this?” - Minnesota

“As a Childcare professional working many hours a week and staying open during a pandemic, we need more help and grants to keep up open and caring for all of the families in our community.” – Minnesota

“This pandemic has taken our income away from our family. Lots of parents working at home now or only go in part-time so they don't need child care as much. As a single person it has cut my income by more than half, we are struggling to survive. We need more funds to help pay our mortgage, food utilities, medical, insurance to survive. We need help now.” – Minnesota

“Family childcare is important for many reasons. Some families rely on us home based child cares to give their children a home away from home atmosphere when they work long hours and can't be there for them. I, like many other home childcares, not only provide a living stable environment but also choose to incorporate a preschool like environment. We teach all the skills needed for them to be successful in Kindergarten. Families need affordable flexible options for their children and that's what we offer.”  
Nebraska

“This business has been my life. My own children have grown up in a house full of friends. Some children throughout the years have needed weekend care because single mom had to travel, weekend care because mom had to visit dad in rehab, early mornings, and late nights in which we take them to ballgames with us. Love and devotion are a big part of this job. I truly do not feel there is any other place for children who have parents that work. Children need to be loved and grow up in a family unit. COVID has recognized us as business owners but we are so much more! Give us support and help us to share our love for all children.” - Nebraska

“We need your help and protection to continue to provide Nebraska families with a choice for Family Child Care. During the pandemic, many providers were forced to close, unable to make the economics of providing care to children affordable for themselves. Programs that reopened coped with under-enrollment and slow growth, which will continue while parents are still unemployed or concerned about large group settings. Costs have risen dramatically due to rising food and supply costs, cleaning supplies and equipment needed to keep children safe, yet we are operating on significantly less income. As families cope with the long-term impacts of COVID-19, they will need a broad array of options to meet their child care needs and return to the workforce. Policymakers must prioritize the robust investment the child care sector needs.” – Nebraska

“We need to have people who want to provide care for children and help families who need it. We as providers need SUPPORT from our states, federal and local governments. We need encouragement, help, appreciation, and again support. Whether that is through offering free trainings during better hours for us, helping with purchasing or helping with more grants as some examples. My families count on me every day. We, providers, are part of the village that is raising their children from birth to kindergarten. It has been a trying year for everyone, I understand that, but through it all child care providers have been working, staying open and caring for the next generations to come. We are



essential workers and should be rewarded as such. Thank you for taking the time to read this.” – Nebraska

“I put forth 100% every day in caring for my littles. My children are grown but I did the same for them when they were little as well. I’d love to be fully educated, fully insured, fully paid, fully appreciated everyday but unfortunately childcare providers have very little of this provided to us, for us, or help to receive these. My husband and I, this is our only income we put at least 50% back into our daycare every year yet we feel useless helpless and hopeless. We need childcare’s to actually care for the children it shouldn’t be just about the income and from what I see in a lot of other facilities it’s about the money. I’m frustrated I’m concerned; I’m scared of losing what I love. My childcare is who I am, who I’ve always been.” – Nebraska

“My families count on me every day to care for their children and trust me to do so, and we have a great bond. My childcare is also my source of income, so my family depends on me being able to have clientele to make that income. Childcare is not just another job; it is a very important role in shaping our youth into productive and kind citizens in our communities. Thank you for giving me the chance to offer my input.” – Nebraska

“I want the Members of Congress to know that the work we do as child care providers is essential, important, and very rewarding. However, it is also very hard, and we feel quite unsupported at times. There is a huge need for child care providers and not enough providers to meet the need. It is tough to meet the regulation requirements both physically and financially. I would love to expand my daycare to better support the needs of my community with so many families needed child care but the thought of having to acquire another loan and mortgage for another facility on top of getting that facility up to code is daunting.” – Nebraska

“We love what we do, but we need help to continue our work. Please listen to us. Thank you for your time.” – Nebraska

“Family Child Care: The place where many children went when their schools were closed, and parents needed to work during the Pandemic. The place where many children stayed with caregivers and their families as their parents worked extended or longer hours due to the Pandemic. The place where children from all backgrounds, races, religions are welcome into a safe place to learn basic life skills and more. The place where families opened up their homes during a Pandemic of unknowns and put their own families and their health's in jeopardy to care for other essential workers children. The last of the essential workers who received no guidance, support, or financial help to navigate the unknowns of the virus and the pandemic. I have been in the childcare field for 24 years, and an owner of two in home child cares for 15 years. We are educators, we are chefs, we are accountants, we are psychologists, we are nurses, we are so much more.” – New York

“I am struggling to pay bills. Families are subsidized by the County, but the rate is well below the cost of care. Unable to hire early child educator due to low pay and no benefits.” – New York

“That right now we need all the help and resources we can get. To maintain the wellbeing and health of these children. Right now, with remote learning we are learning how to use computers and we need help to stay actively on.” – New York

"If I fail, I could LOSE MY HOME! Not just lose my job. I am a one woman show. I work from the first kid in the door to a couple hours after the last. I provide 2 meals and 2 snacks a day, which follow the nutrition guidelines, I have to clean, sanitize, meal prep for the next day. I am responsible for getting all groceries and supplies that are needed and this last 13 months I have also had to be the learning coach for my school aged children while juggling an infant, toddler, and preschooler. I love my job even though I work over 70 hours a week. I make less than \$6 per hour. Please pause and let that sink in. I have a bachelor's degree and make less than \$6 per hour." - Ohio

"I honor my role in the success of the families in my care and am in no way complaining, as I'm sure ALL providers would like to be recognized for what we are!" – Oklahoma

"That we need to be paid more money. We work as hard as a person working at a man factory's job." – South Carolina

"During this pandemic we stayed open, risking our health because of our love for children. We are often looked at as babysitters, but we are so much more. We are educators of young minds and we have a major role in shaping these future children. We are underpaid, underappreciated, and over worked. We spend countless hours preparing our classrooms and curriculum, a large percentage of our profits go back into items for our classroom, and we rarely take time off because we don't get sick pay or paid time off. All of us in the family child care provider world love working with children and we are here to provide high-quality care and enriching environments to families and children. We are tired of being the forgotten industry that is looked at as glamorized babysitters. We are so much more." – Virginia

"I want the members of Congress to know how much the families I provider ECE services for depending upon my availability, the healthy meals, the developmentally appropriate activities and love that I offer to their children each day. I want them also to know how difficult some of these services are to provide financially without passing this burden onto the families. As a society we need to do better for children and families." – Vermont

"Most family home providers remained open during the pandemic. We took in the children of essential workers. We stayed open longer hours so parents could go home first to shower before picking up their children. We even kept them overnight so they could sleep after an exhausting shift. We too were exhausted, but the parents and children needed us, and we providers are the types of people who don't let others down. We went above and beyond.... we need Congress to go above and beyond for us." – Washington

"Uncertainties are making this time hard on us providers. We work on such small margins as is and this past year has been harder than ever. Not knowing when pay will come, how long spots will go empty, families needing but not qualifying for subsidy, my own family depending on my wages and parents needing to know what is coming to plan ahead, these are all things we desperately need help with. I love my career more than anything and I love my kiddos and their families like my own therefore I continue to keep hope and push forward even at times that seem impossible financially. We have all been hearing of help coming but not knowing when is scary. Will it come before I have to close? Will it be too late? Will parents have left the workforce to stay home because they can't afford fees? For my family, my husband has had his fulltime hours cut to part time since February 2020, so my income is more crucial than ever before. We all just need answers with when. When is it coming? When can I help families more? When can I expand my business to help more parents? When, when?" – West Virginia

“They should raise the amount of pay child care workers receive.” – Wisconsin

“The families count on me to show up every day ready to interact and care for and educate their children. My family counts on my income and ability to be present for them outside of my operating hours. This is extremely difficult to do because the amount I can charge families and still be affordable is far less than I should be making with my bachelor’s degree and experience. The extra hours I put in working the business end of my program-because we are a business- eat into my time with my husband and children.” – Wisconsin

“Family child care needs to be included in any universal child care AND preschool programs funded by the Federal government. Head Starts include us. Our families deserve to choose what is best for them. Rural communities absolutely rely on us since a group center isn't feasible in many of those areas AND school districts are so spread out you end up with 3- and 4-year-olds riding buses for hours and no classroom space and playgrounds available or appropriate for them. We need to stop equating free with k-12 and acknowledge education begins at birth and support our children and pay their teachers according to the understanding the biggest impact for the trajectory of their lives is the first five years. Respect us as the teachers, counselors, cooks, nurses, CEOs that we are and acknowledge family child care as a profession worthy of the wage we should earn.” – Wisconsin